/: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

Osseti, in the Mtkvari valley and in Armenia, the principal seats of culture during the Bronze Age, particularly in Colchis, have remained unexplored.[1]

The animal style—variations of which are characteristic of the Bronze Age, not only in the Ægean and in Iran, but also over the Russian plains—was developed in the Caucasus to a state of high technical value; and the mind which seems to interpret itself in this style—the free and lustful ingenuous pagan mind—is the mind of the Caucasians in the pages of Xenophon and Strabo. In the Caucasian Bronze Age there also developed a fine geometrical style, in many respects original to the Caucasus, and with characteristics distinct from the geometrical style of Iran and Mesopotamia which reached its apogee in the early centuries of Islam. This geometrical style with the interlaced and vegetable designs, continued to be a motive of Georgian mediæval art, where it is combined with the Byzantine decorative motives in Georgian ecclesiastical architecture.

With the spread of Hellenic, later Roman, and later Byzantine power round the shores of the Black Sea, the art of the great Mediterranean cultures came to have a direct and overwhelming influence on Georgian art. Christian thought and Christian art came to the Georgians through the magnificent and engulfing channel of the East Christian Church.

The Armenians were original and inventive in architecture, and it has been suggested by Strzygowski and others that Armenian architecture—rooted in the traditions of the older cultures of Iran, Syria and Mesopotamia—itself had a fundamental influence on the development of East Christian art. Whatever may have been the interplay of Byzantine, Armenian and Anatolian influences in the evolution of East Christian architecture between the sixth and twelfth centuries, the Georgians themselves contributed little of originality to the development of East Christian—or of their own local—architecture. At the same time they created many fine interpretations of Byzantine and Armenian architectural conceptions; and it is probable that the Georgians themselves had a definite influence on the spread of Byzantine, and more particularly of Armenian artistic ideas to the Russian principalities.[2]

The Caucasus is celebrated for its rug-weaving. The most beautiful rugs come from the Muslim parts of Caucasus —from Daghestan, Shirvan and Karabagh and from the

[1] See Chaps. II and V.

[2] Cf. Dalton, *East Christian Art*, p. 36.

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Kazakh district of Georgia. No very ancient examples of Caucasian rug-weaving exist, but it is certain that the industry was developed from remote times. But here again, as Georgian architecture is part of East Christian architecture so is the Caucasian weaver's art an integral part of Islamic art —although the Christian weavers of Armenia, using what has come to be an essentially Islamic medium, have acquired no little renown.

Georgian and Armenian illumination, which achieved a certain degree of quality, cannot compare with the gorgeous workmanship of the Persians, and its technique is an adaptation of the Persian manner—including the aged animal style—and East Christian ecclesiastical formalism. The little that remains of Georgian fresco-painting and mosaic-work is crude copying from the Greek masters, but Georgian carving on wood and stone, although in the Byzantine tradition, is good work and has some originality. It is certainly the equal of the Armenian stone-carving which has attained some celebration in Europe.

In two spheres of art did the mediæval Georgians achieve not only quality equal to the best of Byzantium and Persia, but creative originality. In epic poetry, the Georgians far surpassed the Byzantines; and although comparison is difficult and invidious, it may be claimed that the masterpieces of Shota Rusthaveli and Sargis Tmogveli rival, if they do not surpass, the more celebrated works of their Persian contemporaries. And in the metallurgical arts—particularly in their own speciality, the metal icon—the Georgians produced creations which certainly equalled the products of the Islamic and Mediterranean cities of the time.

The churches of Georgia in their general design and structure may be divided into two principal types, which correspond in character to contemporary monuments through the Byzantine world and Armenia. The more ancient was the *centralized* type—the circular or quadrangular chapel, so constructed as to direct the gaze of the devout upward to the arched dome of the cupola, which with its sacred frescoes was to be identified with the vault of heaven. By the sixth century the majority of churches were being built in this style—which Strzygowski derives from the domed tent of the nomad Sacæ and the fashion of which he attributes to the influence of Iranian and Armenian ideas. The old Roman *basilica*, with its broad nave and impression of deep perspective, was passing. Justinian built his church on the Grave of Our Lord in Jerusalem in the new style. It was